

The Art of Science Fiction with Danielle Pajak



[Opening theme music with voiceover.]

Danielle Pajak

"This is such a powerful genre. It's a genre of questioning, of exploring and discovery. It's just as dangerous and harrowing as actually going into space. You don't know the inner space of humanity, what's there, what you'll find. We don't know how fast our actual universe is, and I feel like you don't know how fast the genre itself is and where it can take our imaginations and our souls."

[Theme music plays out.]

Joel McKinnon

Welcome back to Seldon Crisis for a special episode on the theme of the art of science fiction with a very special friend from the Twitter sphere who goes by the exotic name of the Heretical Sayyadina. Fans of Frank Herbert's Dune might recognize the reference. Daniel Pajak is a talented freelance illustrator and scifi connoisseur and a big fan of Foundation, Dune and many other notable scifi novels, movies, and TV shows. This would be the first time I'd heard her voice were it not for a podcast celebrating the most recent entry to the illustrious Star Trek canon, Strange New Worlds called Open Pike Night.

Joel

They have a cool format which allows listeners to take the stage for up to 90 seconds to present their take on the latest episode. We've both spoken up there, but Danielle's submissions have regularly wowed everyone with the depth of insight and artful appreciation of the content of the show. She's a longtime fan of Star Trek, and recently I've succeeded in getting her to give The Orville a try, which I believe you're likely to hear something about on this episode. Welcome, Danielle. Great to have you on Seldon Crisis!

Danielle

Thank you so much, Joel. I'm so glad to be here.

Joel

Great. I've seen a lot of your beautiful drawings on Twitter and on your personal website and really love the style and the evident skill you have as an artist. Can you tell me a little about how you developed your abilities and who are some of your biggest inspirations?

Danielle

Yeah, well, I'm by and large, self taught. I went to college and got my degree in art, and I had a mail correspondence course that I did because I'm home schooled. So my parents got me the mail correspondence course that taught me the way that the classical artists drew, like Michelangelo and Raphael. She taught me those techniques, but for the most part, I'm self taught, and I have a lot of inspiration. I get a lot of inspiration from Japanese artwork, Asian artwork. I'm inspired by them because they live out the beauty and aesthetic that they admire, the minimalism, the Eastern influences.

Joel

I think I can see that in your work.

Danielle

Yeah, there's a lot of anime that I've loved. There's a famous Japanese illustrator named Yoshitaka Amano, who illustrated a lot of video games and books. I also love an artist named Makoto Fujimura, who's a Christian author and fine artist. He's pretty famous in New York. So the Eastern influences. And then I'm also influenced by Kandinski, the German artist. He helped me develop my visual language. He has a really, like, analytical, almost scientific approach to art theory, and that really appeals to me and my analytical mind, and especially with color, because colors are important to me.

Color is how I communicate emotions, and for him, color was what directly influences the soul and that the artist is the one who's playing the keyboard of the person's soul. I was really inspired by his theories on line shape and color. Really amazing. I'm also inspired by medieval artwork because of the symbolism, the sacredness of the art. It's very spiritual. During that time period, imagery is so important because people weren't literate at that time before printing press. So that's how they communicated. That's how they learned through images. And so they had a reference for the image that I feel like we've lost in modern times where you just sat with the image and beheld it and let it come into you like a spiritual meditation.

And that's how I want to approach my art and how I would like people to perceive my art as well.

Joel

Not to just blast through one after another in a half a second.

Danielle

Yeah, exactly.

Joel

Anybody else?

Danielle

Yeah. I'm also inspired by Andrei Tarkovsky, the Russian filmmaker, in several of his movies. And I love the visual aspect of the poetic visual aspect of his yeah.

He is so beautiful. The poetic cinema, his art. And he was very big on the spiritual as well. About focusing on that, especially for the artist, one of his quotes that I love, he says, I believe that to form a concept of art, you first have to face another, more important question. Why does man exist? We have to use our time on Earth to improve ourselves spiritually. This means that art must serve this purpose. So I just really think that's beautiful, really inspiring.

Joel

Cool. If you know any good Internet resources to link to for Tarkovski or any of this, let me know, and I'll add on to the show notes.

Danielle

All right.

Joel

Great on that. So, anyway, this is a podcast, as you know, about science fiction, and specifically Asimov's Foundation, and we'll talk more about that in a bit. But I'd like to start by discussing in larger terms the intersection of art and science fiction. Both the visual treatment of science fiction in movies, TV shows, book covers, etc., but also the art of how science fiction is created, how science fiction creators artfully develop new worlds, exotic characters, and fantastic environments for their stories. And I'm curious, how would you say this amazing genre has intersected with art and poetry, from your perspective?

Danielle

I like to see art as three aspects. I see it as communication, truth, and beauty — and the emphasis on beauty. I see beauty as not just an aesthetic, but something that's all encompassing and buried. So it could be like beauty could be in a child's face and a friendship, in the sun through the leaves or the beauty of the James Webb photos that we received recently. It's in the mundanity of life. It's in the nooks and crannies, and it's heaven reaching down to us and demanding a response. And so to me, that's what beauty is. And I think science fiction has this unique ability to express that.

And I don't think a lot of people see that because I feel like science fiction is kind of seen as the lower art. The literature has myths and fantasy, archetypes and poetry and drama, and those are like high intellectual pursuits. And then science fiction is just about ships and aliens and pew pew shooting. I don't know, I get that perception from the academy and the arts in general, but in recent times, I feel like maybe it has risen in the estimation in people's minds. But I think that ever since I got into science fiction, I thought, you know, that science fiction had this ability to show us the extremes of going into the infinite, showing us the existential void or the sublime heavens.

Joel

It definitely connects with our sense of wonder. It just takes you apart from the ordinary extraordinary by default. You mentioned we were talking earlier about Mary Shelley as a science fiction writer, and most people don't think of her as a science fiction writer. Right. She's classic literature. But I'm kind of wondering why that didn't teach people. Science fiction is important.

Danielle

Yeah, I know, exactly.

Joel

Yeah. When it can ask such powerful questions about the human condition.

Danielle

Yeah. Such a powerful genre. It's a genre of questioning, of exploring and discovery. To me, it's just as dangerous and harrowing as actually going into space because you don't know the inner space of humanity, what's there, what you'll find. Maybe something that you don't want to see.

Joel

Right. Yeah. A lot of people, I think, are blocked by that, not being able to connect with it. Maybe you're connecting with thinking in a very different way about things.

Danielle

Yeah. And I think that we've only scratched the surface of the genre. There's been so many great works of science fiction that are so amazing. We don't know how fast our actual universe is. And I feel like we don't know how vast the genre itself is and where it can take our imaginations and our souls.

Joel

Yeah. I'm sure we're going to be talking about a TV show called The Orville before long, but I was just thinking about how this particular season, and even the past ones, ask so many really interesting questions that are just leave you thinking for days or weeks about the implications of these questions. And a lot of people think of a TV show like that as just being adventure. And it's so much more if handled right. It has so much opportunity to really ask deep questions and get your brain engaged in a way that nothing else can.

Danielle

Yeah. I've just been shocked because as I told you before, I had this impression of the Orville as being a parody.

Joel

Not that it brought that on itself with his history, with such history and the other things he does in the way it started. A lot more light hearted.

Danielle

Yeah, that's true. But I've been like, oh, my gosh, he's exploring the genre the way that I would want it to be explored. He understands it so well.

Joel

I hope he keeps getting financial support and keeps getting it supportive, those streaming networks to put the show out there, and it gets renewed. So anyway, let's talk about what brought Sci-fi into your life. When did you start reading it? Who are some of your favorite authors?

Danielle

Well, my friend actually got me into science fiction. One of my best friends. You've met her on Twitter. She's Luna Moth. I don't know if you remember.

Joel

Yes, I definitely remember that name.

Danielle

Yeah, she's the one that introduced me to Asimov. He was my first introduction into science fiction, of course, and it was the Foundation book.

Joel

You started with Foundation?

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

Most people start with short stories.

Danielle

I think she really loved it, so she's like, you have to read this. And I was like, okay. And it seemed very dense, and so I thought it was going to be a book, a dry read, but I was immediately enthralled, and after I read.

Joel

It, it was just like I'm curious, did you have an interest in history or politics at all that you could connected with through it? Because it's written from the background of his interest in The Decline in Fall of the Roman Empire and so many classics and Shakespeare. He was really into theater and those kind of things. So were those interests of yours?

Danielle

Not really. Actually, I do enjoy politics to a certain degree because I like the clashing of ideas, so kind of like how Star Trek and The Orville use politics. So I do enjoy reading politics, but I'm not really a history person. I'm not really interested in history. So I guess it's kind of unique in that way. But it was because I was just like the way that the dialogue was like, immediately drew you in and you're interested in what these people were doing and saying, even though you probably wouldn't normally be.

Joel

Well, I kind of see a lot of science fiction, especially long time scale science fiction, like Foundation. And Robert Heinlein had, like, a future history arc that went for thousands of years, and lots of different science fiction writers have done that. And so to me, science fiction is kind of the history of the future. I think that's what led me to get really into history of the past, because I just saw that as a spectrum that I could explore in the real direction of what's already happened, and that's just been something that's kept me enthralled for decades.

I got started with a geology degree, and my schooling was heavily focused on hard science. And it was only after I got into that field and started working kind of as a newbie scientist in a way that I found that I really enjoyed the humanities and wondered why I didn't choose that path instead. But if it's with me, I'm always interested in way too many things

to focus on any one of them. Not too surprising. So any other authors that come to mind?

Danielle

Yeah, I've read so many. I mean, there are some I haven't read. Like Heinlein and Philip K Dick. I still haven't read anything of his.

Joel

Heinlein is a really interesting case because I was just hearing one of my favorite writers, Kim Stanley Robinson. I just was listening to one of his talks and he talks about how Heinlein changed so dramatically because when he was writing in the sixties he was pretty wide open and very liberating and really more like a hippie with *Stranger in a Strange Land*. A lot of hippie concepts and stuff that he really loved. And then later in his life he became very conservative and very reactionary. Interesting. Yeah. But in fact, some of his later stuff I really love that gets very poetic.

One of my favorite novels is called *Time Enough for Love* and it's the one in which the protagonist is, I think, three or four thousand years old. And he's born in the late 19th century and he's part of a special family or group of families that are doing something kind of eugenics like but it's breeding, basically. They're like a secret club of people that breed for a long life. They become like centenarians, most of the people in these families. And he was a mutation who happened to have like a very slow beating heart and a great immune system, I guess, and naturally lived for several hundred years. And by the time he was several hundred years old they developed these regeneration capabilities, rejuvenation procedures so that people anybody could live to be thousand years old. He was particularly like a legend of longevity and lived to be three or four thousand years old. I can't remember. But it's so poetic because it's basically him looking back over his four thousand year life at these vignettes. A lot of it is really touching because it's like he would fall in love with a normal human being who would

only live for 70 or 80 years and have to see them grow from a child into an old person with him hardly being touched and knowing that he would have to live beyond them and have to say goodbye to them.

That, to me, was one of the most beautiful books read by him. There are so many. It's great.

Danielle

Yes, that sounds really sad. I'll have to check out his book.

Joel

Yeah, that's a good one. Although it's a long one to get started on. There's a lot shorter ones. He writes some pretty good short stories too, in novellas. I could probably think of a couple to recommend to you.

Danielle

Okay, that'd be good.

Joel

So let's see. Anybody else that comes to mind do you want to talk about?

Danielle

Yeah, so one of my favorites is Hal Clement. I don't know if you've heard of him.

Joel

I've heard of him, but I haven't read him.

Danielle

Like Asimov he's very hard science. He's dry for sure, but I find his works fascinating because he comes up with these really imaginative planets and aliens. But they're, like, realistic because he builds from chemistry up. I read where he and Asimov because Asimov was professor of chemistry, so they would discuss how other alien life forms would develop with different chemistry in ours. So he loved extrapolating different agents.

Joel

Now I remember that where I've heard his name a lot, is in reading Asimov's biography — autobiography.

Danielle

Yeah, his stuff is so good. Arthur C Clarke. Of course. And I haven't read Childhood's End.

Joel

That one's so beautiful. He was one of the big three when I was in high school and college that I read a lot of. Heinlein, Clarke, and Asimov.

Danielle

I recently read his Rendezvous with Rama.

Joel

Yeah. And that's going to be made into a movie by Villeneuve. Yeah, that's going to be amazing. And speaking of his movies, have you seen Arrival? That's based on a story by Ted Chang, I believe.

Danielle

Yeah, he's another author I love.

Joel

Have you read that collection of stories? That's the story based on Arrival. It's a different name I can't remember.

Danielle

The Story of Your Life.

Joel

Yeah. What an amazing collection.

Danielle

Yes, incredible.

Joel

Yeah.

Danielle

He does, like, really imaginative, high concept science. Yeah.

Joel

It's like every story is, like, in a completely different direction, but they're just so, like, wildly imaginative and he turns some concept into just a brilliant story, and every one. Ray Bradbury?

Danielle

Ray Bradbury, yeah. I love his stories about Mars.

Joel

Yeah. That's The Martian Chronicles, Illustrated Man.

Danielle

I haven't read The Illustrated Man or Fahrenheit 451 yet.

Joel

Those are great, too. He's another brilliant short story writer.

Danielle

Yeah. I like Stanislaw Lem.

Joel

I've heard so much about him. And he wrote Solaris, right?

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

And I've always been wanting to read that. I love that movie.

Danielle

The book and the movie are different, but the book is just as good as the film. Stanislaw was all about... I read a few of his books. I still need to read more. But he loves exploring the inexplicable. Like, he loves playing with that concept of, like, something happens that humans just can't understand or comprehend. He just loves playing with that concept.

Joel

That's probably, like, the kind of thing that scares a lot of people who don't read science fiction.

Danielle

Yeah. And he makes it scary, for sure.

Joel

Well, let's talk about Asimov for a moment. So we already talked about you started with Foundation. What else have you read by him that you like?

Danielle

I've read all his science fiction.

Joel

That's saying a lot. Although he wrote a lot more nonfiction than fiction.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

So you've read all the robot stories?

Danielle

Yeah, obviously the robot stories are my top favorite. Daneel and Elijah Bailey.

Joel

You've read the four in that series, The caves of Steel, the Naked Son? Aurora I don't know. Robots of dawn and Robots and Empire?

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

Which is your favorite in those? Do you have one?

Danielle

I can't really choose, but I love Caves of Steel just because of the concept.

Joel

Yeah. It's brilliant world building just from that. He creates such a culture. It's just so fascinating. And it has that feeling of kind of retro, steampunk kind of feel to it no longer. Yeah.

Danielle

I love the Noir genre.

Joel

Yeah. Probably in the Blade Runner. Me, too. That's another great one. What I was going to say is I think my favorite might be The Naked Son, just because the world building and that one and how he describes that planet and the strange culture there with 12,000 people on an Earth sized planet and as many robots as there are people for us. Kind of a crazy idea.

Danielle

Yeah, it was fascinating.

Joel

It's both appealing and terrifying at the same time. There's something like really, it almost feels theme park-ish is to be there, and then you realize these robots are kind of scary. And then when we run into them later in Foundation and Earth and then later still in Robots and Empire. Right? Yeah. There's like two more trips back to Solaria, and it seems like every time you go to Solaria, something crazy happens. That's why I love that one. But the others are great, too. The idea is just so phenomenal. The extrapolation of the Three Laws and the building upon the basic concepts of those Three Laws.

It's just amazing how much mileage he got out of the three laws, right?

Danielle

Yeah. There's so many permutations.

Joel

All the ways they can fail. He played with that for decades. And then he came up with this amazing concept of the Zeroeth Law. That whole series is basically, it seems, working towards developing the Zeroeth Law. And it's both Daneel and Giskard that are talking back and forth and working it out between them and actually gives I'm kind of giving a spoiler here, but he kind of gives a big gift to Daneel.

Danielle

Yeah. That's why I love Asimov's robots, because they're different than any other kind of robot throughout science fiction. To me, they feel like their own race. They're able to evolve and grow.

Joel

We're starting to see that a little bit in The Orville, right?

Danielle

That's true.

Joel

Yeah. With the evolution of the Isaac is starting to become conscious of his own emotional kind of quasi-emotional state.

Danielle

Yeah. I love how The Orville has been evolving Isaac, which is very similar to Data, but I feel like Isaac has more of a disadvantage than even Data had.

Joel

Yeah. And Data always was very fascinated by and very desirous of understanding and being emotive, whereas I never got that feeling about Isaac because he wasn't seeking being emotive until Claire kind of made him want to be emotive. Right? Yeah. So, let's see. I've seen on Twitter a lot that you're a big fan of Dune and particularly the new movie from Villeneuve. Correct me if I'm wrong, but have I seen a picture or two of Timothy Chalamet on your Twitter feed?

Danielle

Yeah, maybe once or twice.

Joel

So what do you feel sets the story apart in the world of Sci-Fi and what's so special about the movie?

Danielle

Well, I'll have to put a qualifier for people who are Dune fans in your audience. I'm not a huge fan of the books, so I'm not that knowledgeable of them. I read the first two, Dune and Dune Messiah, like, a long time ago and I didn't like them then. And I tried reading Dune again after the movie and I still didn't get into it.

Joel

What do you think alienated you in reading those, compared to something like Asimov?

Danielle

I just don't think Frank Herbert is a good writer. I know that might be sacrilegious to his fans, but he just writes really immature. He gives too much what's the term? He just gives too much information. Like, too much information all at once. Like this info dump from his characters. He like hops between characters minds so he doesn't have one point of view. Usually there's books that have, like, George R. Martin, he has chapters where they're told from different points of view of characters, but not like, in the same chapter. Like all these different points of view from the characters.

It makes it really chaotic. Why are we jumping from head to head?

Joel

That might be why I've had some trouble with him, too. I've heard people say, like, as Asimov is too dry or too arid in his writing. It's not flowery enough or something.

Danielle

Well, he's not poetic.

Joel

He's not yeah. I think there are some poetic moments and some of his characters speak poetically on occasion, and there are certain turning points that are so mind blowing that there's a poetry in them. But the thing with Asimov is that he wrote so relateably, it seems like he really understood how to tell a story.

Danielle

He did.

Joel

And he just set them in really crazy places and times. Right?

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

And in a way, the flaws that he made things so relatable that it's kind of absurd how relatable they are. Yeah. 20,000 years in the future, people act just the way they do now. Right?

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

And I think there's if I was writing something 20,000 years in the future, set to 20,000 years in the future, I'd be very tempted to make it completely different because that's what I would expect. And it would be like Herbert, people would have a really hard time understanding what I was talking about. You wouldn't get immersed in the story easily because I've heard that about Stevenson from my son. Neil Stevenson books because there's so much new terminology you have to understand and everything. Right. But that could be sacrilegious to people too because there's lots of Stevenson fans and I haven't actually even attempted to read Stevenson's books.

Yeah.

Danielle

So I don't really enjoy the books, but I loved the movie, like, so much.

Joel

What do you think about Villeneuve's approach? And you said you loved Arrival. What do you think is different about him?

Danielle

To me, he captures the idea that I was talking about earlier about beauty and science fiction. The spiritual, the heavenly, the sublime. He understands that deeper reality within science fiction in Arrival, in Blade Runner 2049, especially. And he's also a very visual. Filmmaking is visual, but he's, like, very visceral, tactile. It's about the shapes and the textures and the sound and envelopes you and fill you up.

Joel

You feel the space he's creating. Right. Yeah, that was what really struck me. Well, wait, no, he didn't do Blade Runner 2049, did he?

Danielle

Yeah, he did.

Joel

Yeah, that was him. Oh, jeez. Yeah. Well, then I definitely understand that. And I can definitely get that in Arrival and in Dune. Dune was very immersive. And you felt like you were in that space.

Danielle

Yeah, the desert. There's so much symbolism in Dune. So, like, the desert is, like, representative of eternity in that connection to space. The eternity of space. One of my favorite posters of Dune, which is where it's really simplistic. It has a semicircle, like pure black semicircle. And then there's, like, the dune on the right side. It looks like a black hole. Like the event horizon of a black hole. And then there's Paul Atreides, like little small Paul Atreides climbing over the dune. And to me, that image represents science fiction right there. Just like in the presence of the singularity of the heavenly, of the divine.

And it's traveling without and traveling within discovery.

Joel

We talked a little bit about Herbert's writing and how it's the same and different from Asimov's Future. Can you explain that a little bit? Like how you see the differences?

Danielle

Yeah, I was trying to think about that because I'm not overly familiar. I'm, like, recently just learning Herbert's world. But to me, they're kind of similar in the sense that they're both very humanistic futures. It's all no aliens or anything. It's just humans spreading out into the galaxy. Very celebratory of the human spirit. If Ray Kirby even goes further where he doesn't even allow robots or AI or computers in his future because in his history there was something called the Butlerian Jihad where they destroyed all their computers and AIs because they thought anything that tried to replicate humanity was, like, sinful things, like horrible.

They got rid of all their robots.

Joel

That's kind of interesting because I'm thinking about the Foundation TV show and they've made these references to the Robot Wars that and there aren't any robots anymore.

Danielle

Yeah. I did not like that. I did not like that they did that.

Joel

Well, we could talk a long time about Foundation TV. To me, I have to see them as completely different stories.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

And I think they're serving very different aims. Well, they're serving a very different audience than what Asimov wrote for.

Danielle

That's true.

Joel

They're trying to reach millions of new viewers who are not cut from the same cloth as, like, the kind of people who first tried Asimov back in the mid 20th century.

Danielle

That's true. So another similarity between asthna and Herbert is that they both have this idea about guiding humanity to a better future, as most psycho history. For Frank Herbert, they control the politics of the imperium from the shadows, and they can control genetics, and they have their benefit, like Mary, into different dukes, to spread the seed that they want to create their chosen one. The kwisatz haderach...

Joel

Which is like the male version of the one that can see the future or no see the ancestors experience?

Danielle

The past and future. The female one can going can only experience the female ancestors, right, and the kwisatz herach can theoretically experience both male and females.

Yeah. So they want to create the golden path to a better future. And then so it's like Harry Seldon's plan, trying to create a better future for the Foundation. But for Frank Herbert, it's more negative. He incorporates religion, the Bene Gesserit, create a religion around their chosen one. So religion is seen in this kind of negative light. And I think that Asimov was more humble in his approach, more honest, because he was more having a dialogue like the pros and cons of the Foundation.

Joel

Yeah. And I'm just getting into the depths of Second Foundation now, and this understanding that the Foundation is getting that they are being guided by the Second Foundation, and they don't like it, and they're like, reacting against it as seeing them as the enemy that we're really designed to be their allies. But they're revolting at the idea of being guided invisibly by somebody else.

Danielle

Yeah. There's an idea of, like, free will. Like, do they have free will?

Joel

And everybody desperately wants to believe they're important. They're not just cogs in a machine. Yeah. Right.

Danielle

Yeah. And then Asimov in his sequels after the original trilogy, he's bringing in the planet and the concept of Galaxy and The One Mind. We talked about this before on the Internet. He was trying to figure it out as he was writing it.

Joel

Right. I got that feeling, especially in Foundation and Earth, that it was like just like the argument with himself, like, which way it makes sense. Which way do I want things to go? And he couldn't really settle on which was the preferred outcome. He was still driving forward, and he was kind of, like, writing aloud of what he was thinking through. That's very different than most of his stories, where he seems to be kind of, like, totally in control of the narrative. And there he was kind of getting lost in his own narrative and his own self questioning about it.

Danielle

Which I appreciate, even though it was sad he never got to finish it. I appreciated that because I was like, you know, I love that aspect of the arguments between the two characters and their perspectives and, like, what this would mean for humanity. I like how it has you join in with that conversation, whereas I feel like Frank Herbert was making statements about religion and people's connection with myths and mythology. That is kind of arrogant, from my perspective.

Joel

He was more declarative about, this is how it is, and I'm just going to explain it to you.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

And I feel like maybe the problem Asimov found was that he was running out of time and he wanted to finish the story, but he didn't really know how it should end yet. He didn't have time to sit there and ponder for forever and figure out what the best solution was. So he had to kind of just write what was going on in his head. Yeah. And what's interesting is I've seen a lot of people on the Internet, on Reddit, especially, that don't like those last couple of the sequels, especially Foundation and Earth, because it's described as just a lot of bickering between Bliss and Golan Trevize.

Right. And there is definitely some bickering between them.

Danielle

Yeah. Which I thought was hilarious.

Joel

Yeah. What was really interesting, talking to Achintya in the History and Foundation episode, he loved Foundation and Earth more and he said that was his favorite book. And yeah, he really loved the philosophical implications of that argument that the other books didn't appeal to him as much, where it was kind of just adventure and mystery. And here's the resolution. He really liked the open ended aspect of that.

Danielle

Okay.

Joel

Yeah.

Danielle

Almost on par with the original trilogy.

Joel

Well, they're different in some ways, better in some aspects. There's another aspect of Foundation and Earth I love is just that, the grand adventure of returning to Earth and re-encountering worlds like Solaria and Aurora. Especially if you've read them before you read the sequels, then you're like, oh, my God, he's talking to me. This is something that I love and I've always had in my head. And here it's like we're back to these worlds and tens of thousands of years later, from the — I don't know how much, at least several thousand years afterwards, you see the decline and the decay of Aurora, and you see what became of the robots on Solaria, and it's just fascinating.

Tropes... Sci-Fi concepts. This is something I know we've talked about a lot on Twitter arguments. Yeah. So what are some of your favorite tropes?

We can go through them one by one. We've already talked about robots a little bit.

Danielle

Well, yeah. Robots are my favorite, pretty much. I mean, to me, they're separate from AI, I guess, HAL 9000 from 2001 Space Odyssey could be considered AI, but I loved him.

Joel

You're not supposed to love him. I did, too, especially when they were shutting him down. I really had.

Danielle

Did you see 2010, the sequel.

Joel

I did, but it's so long ago. It didn't stick in my head like 2001 did. I actually saw 2001 in a theater. I'm old enough that I got to see it and it might have been the first movie I saw in the theater.

Danielle

Wow.

Joel

Yeah. I was, like, nine years old.

Danielle

Oh, my God.

Joel

Yeah, something like that.

Danielle

In the sequel, HAL gets redeemed.

Joel

Okay.

Danielle

Yeah. There's, like, an explanation for what happened to him.

Joel

Yeah. Now it's coming back to me. I don't remember the explanation, but I seem to remember he gets off the hook a little bit.

Danielle

Yes.

Joel

Way too late for Frank Poole.

Danielle

No.

Joel

And all the sleepers.

Danielle

Yeah. They didn't get a chance.

Joel

No. At least they didn't suffer.

Danielle

Of course. I love the robots, the Kaylons in Orville.

Joel

So many questions about those Kaylon.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

Were they justified? And their revolt against the builders.

Danielle

All right?

Joel

Again. There's no three laws with the Kaylon. Right. So it's like, where do they cross the line to saying it's okay to kill humans or their builders? And that's a very provocative idea because we're going to be facing something similar before too long, where in a few decades at least. Yeah.

Danielle

I'm kind of like, let's just not do this. I just hate everything about the AI that's been being developed.

Joel

No, the big question is, can they become sentient? And if they can become sentient, then it's damn important to put proper values into them. Have you ever read Superintelligence by Nick Bostrom? That will give you nightmares. It's nonfiction, speculative nonfiction stuff, but it's about his theories for why we're being incredibly naive about AI. And that in thinking that we will be able to control super intelligence when it becomes conscious. And we think, well, we'll just shut it off. No, it will know that we'll just want to shut it off and it's not that simple. So we need to give it the right values.

And how do you fix those values so that they don't change? Because if it's super intelligent, it might just say, screw those values. They don't make sense to us. Those are your values.

Danielle

Well, I think we could just put the Three Laws. Three Laws are pretty basic.

Joel

Exactly. Yeah. And I think one thing I've been hoping with the Foundation TV series, it's just the idea of bringing Asimov's concepts back into the discourse, but they're not really doing a good job of bringing the Three Laws in yet. Yeah.

Danielle

I was wondering if they even had the rights to Three Laws. Yeah.

Joel

And I heard they didn't have the rights to the robot stories yet, but they weren't negotiating so maybe season two could be very different if they got those rights and they started to really make that part of the story. Okay, and what's his name? Oh come on! The show runner, help me out.

Danielle

I forgot his name, but yeah, I.

Joel

I know it starts with G. I'm going to have to edit this. Come on. Anyway. Okay. The showrunner for Foundation...

Danielle

Goyer.

Joel

Of course! David Goyer. I actually really like him when I've heard him talk, and I think he's got a lot of really cool ideas and he's got really a lot of talent. And I think that's what gives me hope that it could still be a really good show in the long run. But he was saying that he takes the Three Laws seriously and that he wants to work with them. So maybe he knows that those rights are going to come through and he's gonna start...

Danielle

Well, that would be awesome. I didn't really get the vibe that he took the Three Laws seriously.

Joel

Demerzel is a little bit not proper with the First Law, but you can always say it's zeroeth law, get out of jail free card for her. Right.

Danielle

But the other aspect of AI for me is the loss of our own humanity through AI. Like just relying on algorithms and putting everything into a box formula. I've seen the AI generated arts, I've seen the AI generated stories, and as an artist, I hate it.

Joel

Yeah, I can see why you would. Well, the thing that's missing is biochemistry and emotions that come from our nerve endings and all these crazy chemicals moving through our brains and our bodies that create mood. I don't know if we're going to have to find a way of simulating that or, like, injecting that into artificial intelligence. Or maybe we're on the wrong track with a digital approach to artificial intelligence and that it won't become sufficiently like humans in that regard until we have biological kind of computers that have glands and things that are unpredictable a little bit and can have wax and wane in certain ways, not just straightforward algorithmic like you're saying.

Danielle

I just worry for just our own humanity.

Joel

Yeah, but then this is why the Orville approach to it is so interesting, because we're going to run into that same situation. If we get sentient creatures, then we have to really rethink our relationship with them. We can't treat them as just our servants anymore because they'll have their own free will and we have to respect that. And I think attempting to control it like they did on the show is going to result in something similar at some point.

Danielle

Yeah, right.

Joel

One thing that's really interesting to me about the builders situation with the Kaylon is that they're all confined to one planet. What if the builders had developed space travel? They seem to be pretty technological and escaped the planet and gone on settled different worlds. Then this would have been much more difficult for the Kaylon to wipe out.

Danielle

Yeah, that's true.

Joel

And maybe there's builders still around somewhere.

Danielle

Oh, yeah. He could always bring it back.

Joel

Yeah, that would be cool.

Danielle

That would be really cool. Then the Kaylon would have to face what they did.

Joel

Yes. And they might look at it differently. This Timmis situation is going to come into play, I think.

Danielle

Okay.

Joel

Something that's going to become like some new wave of Kaylon rights to become emotive. Right. And there will be like, the division between the emotive Kaylon and the non emotive Kaylon.

Danielle

There's like, so many ways you can take this.

Joel

I'm sorry. I've totally forgot. We need to talk about the passing of Nichelle Nichole.

Danielle

Yeah, yeah.

Joel

There have actually been two great losses in the last few days and we just missed a chance to talk about one when you mentioned Gaia because James Lovelock, the guy who came up with the Gaia principal died at 103.

Danielle

Oh, wow.

Joel

Yeah. He was the co creator of it with Lynn Margulis, Sagan's wife, I believe. I think. So. They both came out with the book, which was released very soon, just a little bit before Foundation and Earth. So Asimov's discussion of that concept was based on that concept coming out in the book Gaia, and it was kind of took the world by storm for a little bit before it got beaten down by the established scientists.

Danielle

Yeah, that puts a whole different context perspective. I've heard of the Gaia principal, but I just thought Asimov was making it up himself.

Joel

No, it was a known principal already and he extended it in his own way and thought of it, but yes. Nicoles — I was just reading her Wiki after the last couple of hours to get some thoughts on her life. Just amazing how important she was. Not just as being the first black character on popular TV in the multi-racial context. And the famous first kiss, which wasn't the first kiss between black and a white person on TV. But she became really involved in NASA.

Danielle

Yeah, I know.

Joel

I love that. And recruited a lot of the groundbreaking astronauts, female and African American astronauts were from her efforts. And one of the saddest things I read in her Wiki is that two of her recruits died in Challenger. Judith Resnick and Ronald McNair. And that must have just rocked her.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

Because they must have been very close and she must have just held great hope for them.

Danielle

I know.

Joel

She must have felt terrible about it. And then the other one that struck me, another great tragedy for her is her son. Is it her son? No, her brother. She had a younger brother who was a member of Heavens Gate cult. Committed a mass suicide.

Danielle

Oh, my God. I did not know that.

Joel

I didn't know that either. But yeah, that's rough. And those weren't too far apart, I don't think. But, yeah, she was a great one.

Danielle

Yeah, she lived her character in reality.

Joel

She did have so much wonderful impact on our science fiction landscape, how important Star Trek is and how much it got accepted into the zeitgeist and everything. So another scifi trope — time travel. What do you think about the way Strange New Worlds just handled it in the last episode?

Danielle

Yeah, I mean, new Treks, they introduced the time crystals.

Joel

Seems a little bit like a cheat.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

But then again, every time travel story is a little bit of a cheat, right? There's no way you can do it. But I kind of like the way the Orville did it. I think the one flaw to me is that the cheat is this idea of you'll just go where you're thinking about what you're thinking about. Like Gordon was thinking about Laura's time, so that's where he went.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

So there's a lot of like, mystery hand waving there about the unconscious participates in this technology in some unspecified way, but it works. And they did the exact same thing in Foundation for like in the TV show where the ships called the Invictus the big giant jump ship, you'd have to plug into it and just think about where you wanted to go and it would jump there. And that's how Salvor Hardin got back to Terminus.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

I don't know if there is a good way of doing time travel that satisfies, but The End of Eternity was pretty satisfying.

Danielle

Yeah. Well, yeah, the End of Eternity obviously one of my favorite as love books. That one sparked my imagination so much.

Joel

I just loved it. I had no idea I was going to love that book so much and it just blew me away. Not just the time travel aspect, but just the ideas that it brings out about what humanity needs to do in the future. Do we want to find a way to just kind of develop a system that makes everybody as comfortable as possible and it provides a high enough lifestyle, a good enough lifestyle to everyone indefinitely? Or do we want to take incredible risks to change and put ourselves into a situation where we're forced to adapt and evolve?

One of the things I think about a lot of science fiction is it doesn't think about humans changing significantly. But the problem there is like what we'd already talked about. If you change too much, then you lose people, right? And so you want to keep people as people, but in reality, that's not likely to be the outcome. When we start to move into completely different situations where there's different gravity and different atmospheres and all that kind of stuff, the evolution is going to take over and change people to be different and in fundamental ways. And you mentioned earlier about aliens and how the aliens in Star Trek and the Orville and a lot of science fiction, they're kind of like variations on humans, right?

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

They've got brow ridges and things. Right. But they're pretty much humans.

Danielle

Right. There are different ways of exploring our humanity. They're kind of like representations of different aspects of our humanity.

Joel

Yeah, right. The crazy astrology people that wanted to throw Kelly and Bordas in a prison camp because they were born under a wrong star. Right. Lots of different ones. But what strikes me is and I was thinking about this back when I was doing the one with Stephen Webb on the Science of Foundation, it's not particularly likely that we're going to find intelligent aliens anywhere close to our solar system. It's becoming much less likely the more you study all the different ways that it's incredibly difficult to develop intelligent life and how blessed this solar system is in so many ways.

So the reality of it may be much like Asimov wrote it where there aren't any aliens. And I read that he came up with that idea of there not being any aliens in his galaxy because he realized that aliens would destroy humans, they'd be so advanced over us, that would be the end if we met intelligent aliens, so he didn't want them. That ends the story. Right. So maybe that's what we should be hoping for. There are no intelligent aliens. Right. And if that's the case, then we might get a situation where we expand into the galaxy eventually.

But what's interesting to me is that even if that was the case, humans would develop on different worlds in different ways. And you might have something that's similar to what Star Trek has and that you'd have like

these other variations of humans that are like Klingons's or Romulans, however they develop on those worlds.

Danielle

Yeah, that makes sense. Asimov did a similarish idea with all the different outer worlds different than Earth. Humanity on Earth was different than humanity out in space because they had to adapt to the different lifestyles.

Joel

Well, I know on Gaia especially, that was a completely different way than humans develop. Yeah, right.

Danielle

Asimov did write a couple of alien stories that were amazing.

Joel

The Gods Themselves.

Danielle

Yeah. And Nemesis.

Joel

Yeah, I read both of those. And I read Nemesis not that long ago. I really loved it. It's one of the only stories of his that I know of that's got more women characters than men. There's such an interesting dynamic between the protagonist, the young 15 year old girl and her mother.

Danielle

It was very different for Asimov. He developed as a writer.

Joel

She had that — I think it's such an Asimovian concept of not mental control, but just ability to read body language extremely well. Her mother couldn't bullshit her about anything because she always knew exactly when her mother was lying to her. Right. That was just fascinating.

Danielle

So as much aliens are like very otherworldly, especially in *The God Themselves*. Like they're in another dimension, separate parts.

Joel

And then their sex life requires had three genders that had to mix in like a cloud in some way. That was really fascinating.

Danielle

Yeah. So I love the golden age of science fiction because the aliens were more imaginative, I feel.

Joel

Like brow ridges and completely different forms. Yeah, typical and all that.

Danielle

Yeah, of course, I love all the aliens in *Star Trek* and *the Orville*, but I feel like ever since the movie *Alien* that came out, all aliens kind of look the same. Now in movies, they look like the alien.

Joel

Yes.

Danielle

Even in the new Star Trek, which the Strange New Worlds, which I loved, even the Gorn, how they designed Gorn, the redesign was very alien.

Joel

I was thinking back on Strange New Worlds and thinking, I prefer the Gorn when we didn't see them yet. Not because of the canon violations or anything. I was able to kind of put TOS Gorn completely aside.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

But just that feeling of the complete mystery of what they were was so powerful in that one story with their first encounter with them, where they never actually saw one, but they got the very clear sense of how dangerous they were.

Danielle

Yeah, that was true. They're not very subtle.

Joel

But, you know, one of the new Trek episodes that have given me a lot that I've been thinking about is Ghosts of Illyria because it was flawed in a lot of ways, the whole vitamin D thing, like that. The problem was insufficient vitamin D, and they had to get lots of light, and that made no sense at all. But the thing that I loved was this idea of the legitimacy of changing. This goes back to what I was just talking about, with humans adapting and evolving to suit their worlds, that they were kicked out of the Foundation.

The Illyrians were kicked out of the Foundation. What's it called? The Federation. The Federation. There you go. They're kicked out of the Federation for the crime of — the sin of changing themselves.

Danielle

Oh, yeah.

Joel

And it seems like that shouldn't be I can see because of the Eugenics Wars, it was a taboo, but really, that seems like a valid thing to do. And why insist on staying the same in an environment that's quite different? It makes sense to adapt to it.

Danielle

Yeah. And Star Trek is all about evolving. So it's like, maybe I would hope maybe they're going to explore that in the second season.

Joel

There's a lot they could do in the second season. And I feel like that it was a great show. I really enjoyed it, and I think I would have had a very different feeling about it if I hadn't discovered The Orville halfway through it and the new series of The Orville, because that bothered me, is that every Thursday I had to like, which one do I watch first? At first it was, of course, Strange New Worlds, because that was the pattern. And then it took only a couple of weeks before I was watching The Orville first.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

And that's why I stopped doing submissions to Open Pike because I was still pondering The Orville's latest show and like, I can't really do any thinking about Strange New Worlds, what happened.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

It's a shame because there were great ideas and concepts that have her sacrifice for the crew. Great.

Danielle

I love the season. I feel like it's definitely going in a better direction than for New Trek.

Joel

Other New Trek, you mean? Yeah, and I can't slam New Trek because I haven't really explored it yet, but I've heard lots of things that people have complained about. I actually watched the first two Picard and had a hard time with them.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

I had high hopes for Picard, too.

Danielle

Because it was I know.

Joel

I thought, well, Picard's not going to come back and do a show unless he's got brilliant writing.

Danielle

Especially when I heard about the second season, which is even worse than the first season. Kind of, like, diminished my admiration for Patrick Stewart because I'm like, Why did you sign on for this?

Joel

Yeah. And now it's really tempting to get back into it with the return of all the TNG.

Danielle

Right? Yeah. They snare you back in.

Joel

Yeah. I'd love to see all those people telling stories, but I don't want to do new stories with them if they're not written well.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

The writing is really pretty damn important.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

So one more trope I wanted to talk about a little bit is alternate history, other timelines and stuff. And we've seen great versions of that. Like with The Orville thing with the... well we actually saw in Strange New Worlds, too, in the final episode, even though it used time crystals. But the idea of the alternate reality of that was really interesting. And whatever is happening with Gordon and Laura, potentially multiple Gordons and Laura, different universes based on whatever interpretation of quantum physics you want to use.

Danielle

Yeah. I wonder how he's going to handle that in the future. I'll be interested because, as you know, I'm not happy with the way he took it.

Joel

Well. Yeah. But I think one rule that we know is when an episode ends ambiguously in any way, there's another episode coming later yeah. That's going to take up the story and explore that loose end. So that's why I think for sure we're going to see Laura again. One way or another, that's going to come back. They might have a hard time explaining it, but they'll find a way because they've got to bring that back. That's my bet. I wanted to tell you about a novel I read In The Country of the Blind by Mike Flynn that I found really fascinating in just the idea because it's so similar to psychhistory.

And it begins in the well, I guess it begins like, in the 70s or something a little earlier from when it was written. And this woman who's a brilliant scientist, mathematician, and for some reason she's doing real estate, but she discovers, like, she wants to buy this old building, and she finds these old mid 19th century computing machines. And in the early 19th century, there was a guy named Charles Babbage that created an idea for a very sophisticated computation machine computer, like, long before

computers. Right. But he came up with this concept and drew up plans for it that have been lost.

And so it's not clear if he ever actually built one, but in the story that was the premise of it, he did. He succeeded in building them, and, like, a small group of people became adept at using them and learned how to predict the future, what was going to happen coming up. And basically, they called this Cliology, not psychohistory, based on Clio who is the Goddess of Time, I think. Basically, they play the stock market and stuff, and they become fabulously rich and control affairs going into the 20th century, and they're behind a lot of these big changes that happened, but then they split up into other groups.

They have, like, factions that split up and stuff. And so when you get into modern times, these factions are still all around. There's, like, six of them all around the world, and they're fighting each other behind the scenes.

Danielle

That sounds so fascinating.

Joel

Yeah, it was pretty cool.

Danielle

It kind of reminds me of the Eternals as well.

Joel

The Eternals? And I've been wanting to check that out because it came out right around when I fell in love with the End of Eternity, so I'm not that aware of I'm not a comic book guy.

Danielle

Oh. I'm talking about the Eternals in the End of Eternity, not the.

Joel

Much like that, like, reminiscent of them being, like, behind the scenes, controlling things.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

The optimal way to go forward, not necessarily playing the stock market.

Danielle

Yeah. Well, I have to check out that book. It sounds really cool. I want to mention in going back to time travel and technologies between Orville and Star Trek, I want to know why Seth McFarland, why he didn't have them have transporters. They can do literally everything that Star Trek does, but they can't transport.

Joel

Yeah.

Danielle

I don't understand why scientifically, they couldn't be able if they can create sims.

Joel

Like they shouldn't be able to have replicators if they can't do transporters. Yeah, I think it's a really interesting decision to force them to travel physically, like, to use the shuttles. And it reminds me of Enterprise, Star Trek Enterprise, because the transporter was brand new and nobody trusted it, so they didn't want to use it.

Danielle

I was thinking maybe that could be the explanation. Like humanity just was too afraid of it, that in the Orville universe that they never tried out.

Joel

Yeah, I guess they could say the replicators can't replicate a living being, and they can only replicate inanimate objects.

Danielle

That's true.

Joel

But we know it can replicate pot brownies. Apparently, it doesn't destroy the potency.

Danielle

And another interesting aspect about between the Orville and Star Trek in the time travel stuff is that the Union has been in the Academy, they teach them about time mechanics and time travel. I thought that was really I love that concept. Like, they actually had to go to school for that.

Joel

Right. So it was really drilled into them why you don't mess around. And if you do manage to go back in time, you have to behave yourself really well. Right. Or else you're going to do things.

Danielle

But in Star Trek, they don't have that, and they're just, like, mucking around time and space, and they have the Department of Temporal Investigations in Star Trek.

Joel

Is this in Discovery world?

Danielle

It's actually in Deep Space Nine. They are mentioned.

Joel

I never watched I only did a few Deep Space Nine, and I want to get into it someday.

Danielle

Yeah, but the concept of that temporal agency is that they investigate all time travel violations.

Joel

Which is very much like at end of Eternity that you get in big trouble if you don't do the minimum allowable change oh, yeah. If you just make big changes. Like taking your girlfriend into the future while you're getting big trouble. Yeah.

Danielle

It's kind of like the Eternals in that sense, too. The funny thing is that they said that James D. Kirk had the most time travel violations in their history. Yeah, that was funny.

Joel

But James T. Kirk can just do anything whatever the hell he wants.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

But this brings back me back to our discussion about Gordon, because I think it's clear that Gordon breaks boundaries. He ignores boundaries, and that's why he's such a great pilot, because he doesn't, like, allow himself to. He just basically says, Why can't I do this? I'm going to do this. This is what needs to be done. And that's how he pushes himself into becoming incredible flying. So it makes sense to me that he would think the same way about time.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

And when he finds himself back there stranded, he's like, okay, the rules are such I have to stay here and be completely invisible until I die, but I'm Gordon Malloy, I'm going to do whatever the hell I think needs to be done right now. I can't think of any other better thing than going to find Laura Huggins or what started it in the first place. Finding a cell phone in the future and saying, I'm going to create a simulation of this girl because I'm in love with her and I want to meet her in real life. It's a boundary.

Danielle

Yeah, he does. I have grown to love his character. Fascinating by the growth of his character.

Joel

Well, he's a well meaning guy. It's not like he's malicious in the way he messes with things, but he has a good heart.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

He's not really a creep now. Can do creepy things. And not seem creepy because he's got such a great heart.

Danielle

Yeah, he's endearing. And I hope that if they continue to story with Laura that they kind of delve more into the rules of time travel. Like why they have those rules and why they're so absolute.

Joel

Yeah, it almost seems like to have such absolute rules, they should have examples of what has happened when people have not followed those rules. Because generally you don't get rules unless there have been accidents. You don't get a stop sign put up unless there's been a collision at an intersection, that kind of thing. So it brings to mind, if they have such training and rules and everything, then perhaps there's been some time travel incidents in the past that we haven't heard about.

Danielle

Yeah, I would hope that he would explain that, maybe do some more world building with us.

Joel

I wanted to talk about one more thing. We're getting kind of late, but it's been fascinating. I really enjoyed it. Fantasy. Where do you see the line between science fiction and fantasy? Where does it cross over into that?

Danielle

Well, for me, fantasy has its roots in mythology. So the archetypes, it's more magical, spiritual, whereas I see science fiction more focused on not just science, but it's about questioning, it's about ideas. It can be some overlap because like, Dune is kind of an overlap kind of side fantasy because it explores mythology as well as science fiction concepts, so there can be overlap. But to me that boundary is between, I guess, like ideas versus mythology.

Joel

It's interesting you put it in those terms because I wouldn't normally think about it that way. I think more like just violating or doing things that we have no that the author makes no attempt to explain. Right. But I like this idea of basing it in mythology because well, as you know, I've written a story that made a podcast of that's kind of mythologically based in a way, I kind of think of it as not legitimately Sci-Fi, even though it's set in a universe where things are explained in a kind of a hard science fiction wrapper.

These scientists arrive at this planet and find a beacon and they find something emanating and they study it and then they find out that it's a story being told and the story is mythology and they're mythological creatures. The story involves characters that are heavenly bodies, the

planet and the sky, and they fall in love and then there's the travelers that arrive, which is also hard science fiction based on the idea of panspermia. But it's like not very well explained how these travelers saw these microbes turn into these creatures that seem to speak and have communication, have conversations back and forth and things like that. I'm thinking, is it scifi or is it fantasy?

And it feels like maybe it's fantasy because it's got that mythological aspect to it.

Danielle

Yeah, I guess I would say you're saying it's more it would be a combination of sci, fantasy kind of overlap.

Joel

It's interesting in writing that I always feel like I've got to explain things somehow. I have to come up with some way of that's kind of why I threw in the thing about the memory clays and how they record the story. I actually talked to a biologist, NASA astrobiologist NASA that I had met already, and asked her, how can I explain this realistic? Like, explainable without just hand waving it? And she helped me come up with that idea of the clay mat. So it's got something behind it.

Danielle

Yeah. I really loved your story so much.

Joel

Well, good. Now that we've talked about it, I can put it in the show notes again.

Danielle

Yeah, I guess you have a combination of that hard science with fantasy, so you're kind of like blending it together.

Joel

So it's not really hard. Yeah. Normally things are either Sci-Fi or fantasy, and if something becomes is told as hard Sci-Fi, which I think Star Trek essentially is introduced as, then it's a violation if it becomes fantasy. I didn't like the Elysiann mysteries at first. What was it called? The seemed like they were crossing that boundary in fantasy. The tradition of doing that in Star Trek.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

As long as you don't stay there. I guess there's some kind of gobbledegook explanation. There's some kind of technical babble about how it works, but that one felt like a big stretch to me. Just a nebula that's intelligent. Who knows? Maybe it's okay.

Danielle

I know there's other acorporeal beings in Star Trek.

Joel

Well there's Q.

Danielle

Yeah, Q right.

Joel

Yeah, that's probably the most notorious example. And in a way, Q carried it off with charisma. Q was so good and so endearing in his way that you didn't want to have it explained to what? You didn't want to have it you wanted it to be okay. Yeah, we wanted it to be part of Star Trek. I'll allow this one because he's Q.

Danielle

Yeah. I love the Q, and I feel like the Q continuum has so much potential conceptually for Star Trek that they didn't like they just barely scratched the surface.

Joel

Yeah. Maybe they needed to dig in a little bit more and explain it to satisfy me, to make me feel like it's not that I'm accepting this just because I like the actor doing it, and I like the dynamics of him taunting Picard and playing games with him. Also, Q does time travel. Right? Throws people back in time just.

Danielle

Yeah, like he threw Picard.

Joel

You're going to be in the Academy and see why you didn't want to be different than you are. Great ideas.

Danielle

Yeah, I love that, even though I thought it was kind of simplistic of, like making choices throughout life had such a drastic change in the Picard's trajectory. Yeah. I don't know. That seems a little bit simplistic.

Joel

Yeah. Well, the other thing it was a little bit hard to swallow in that one was that they made Picard the same age, but actually he's supposed to be much younger.

Danielle

Yeah, that was weird, too.

Joel

That was weird. I know what we didn't talk about, and we should wrap up soon. But the art of storytelling.

Danielle

Oh, yeah.

Joel

Yeah. Because we're talking about the art and science fiction. Getting back to that. But the art part is, like, how it's based on storytelling, what makes a good story. So do you have any thoughts on that?

Danielle

Yeah, for me, storytelling art has the aspects of communication, truth and beauty. So storytelling has those aspects as well. But I think the emphasis is on truth. There has to be a sense of trueness about our experiences as human beings.

Joel

Drawn from life.

Danielle

Yeah, drawn from life. But also just like a sense of, I guess, questioning of wonder. Not to always have everything in a box. I don't like stories that put everything, like, nicely, neatly tied up, but have it be more exploratory. How they allowing people to interact with the story, like how to have a dialogue with it.

Joel

Reality. If we're drawing from life in reality, we're not in a box, right? Yes. We're not algorithmic, so we don't wrap things up neatly.

Danielle

No.

Joel

We're all struggling to find meaning all the time. And what is the meaning of life? Why are we here? Those are the missing walls of our box. So a good story has to do away with those walls in the same way it can't be constrained and algorithmic to get back to that word.

Danielle

Yeah. And I guess sometimes it's kind of tempting because I know that I get pretty tightfisted about my canon, keeping things in canon. But I was just thinking about how often times from our stories we expect things to be more orderly than reality actually is. So we always get upset about our stories if they don't do something that we're comfortable with or that's not human beings would do that. That doesn't seem realistic, but in reality, it's more unpredictable and crazier than anything we could imagine. Yeah, I think maybe sometimes we like the comfort of the boxes. Sometimes.

Joel

Yeah. The endless space. James Webb is scary, seeing how far things are and how there's no walls out there. I think we need to wrap things up. But before we go, can you tell me about what you're working on?

Danielle

Yeah, I'm working on my own science fiction story called Infinity's End, very much inspired by The End of Eternity. And it's about my own future reality. So I'm extrapolating how future humanity would be like, and it's centered on the main protagonist is a physicist who is trying to discover the end of the universe. So in my universe, I have it. The infinite contained. So, like a circle. So there's infinity, but self-contained. I study a lot about Stephen Hawking. I got some of his ideas. He was kind of like, coming up with theories about a contained universe or further back in time.

You go to the north pole of the sphere and the South Pole, the sphere, so there's no beginning or end. You can't go any more north than north or south and south. So for him, time had no beginning or end. It just all self contained. So I'm kind of playing with that idea, but my character is trying to break out of that container.

Joel

What form is this taking? How will you present it? This story an artist. Right. Cool. Well, is there anywhere anybody can find what you're doing online?

Danielle

Yeah, you can go on my website, DPIllustrations.com, that you can find out more information about all my art and that project Infinity's End, which I don't have anything up for it yet. I just have all my preliminary concept art and stuff.

Joel

Cool.

Danielle

I haven't finished anything. It's a huge, ambitious one.

Joel

Yeah, well, I love the idea to develop it. It's been wonderful talking to you, Danielle.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

I encourage anyone who's listening still with us to check out Danielle on Twitter, and that would be at, sayyadinaheresy. Right. And the Sayyadina comes from Dune. Right. What's the heresy part?

Danielle

Heresy. Is that because I'm a Dune rebel, so I have my own interpretations of Dune. I kind of annoy the Dune fandom with my ideas of Dune.

Joel

Troublemaker, huh?

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

Okay. And I'll put that in the show notes for sure people, so they know where to reach you, because I can tell anyone that Danielle is fun to follow on Twitter because she's always engaged in whatever cool science fiction is happening. She's always got really interesting interpretations of things. Great. Wonderful to argue with about different interpretations of the latest episode of the Orville or Strange New Worlds or whatever.

Danielle

Yeah.

Joel

And I look forward to seeing you again there.

Danielle

Yeah, me too. I got to do this.

Joel

Yeah. Cool. Well, I'm glad. I'm going to remind people that this is Open Pike's fault, because we had a long exchange going back and forth, and you and I were involved in discussing things back and forth for quite a while and monopolizing the conversation. And I think it was Open Pike who was running the account and said, you know Sayyadina and Joel should be on their own podcast. So now we are.

Danielle

Yeah. Open Pike has really inspired us to do stuff.

Joel

Yeah, it's a great concept they have with the ninety second submissions. I encourage listeners to check out that which will be in the show notes as well. Okay, thanks. Thank you very much, Danielle!

[Closing theme music.]